

Village of Ardentown  
Ardentown, DE 19810

Established 1922  
Incorporated 1975

The regular meeting of the Village of Ardentown was convened at 7:30 pm on Monday, February 10, 2020 Alison Wakelin, Town Chair, presiding. A quorum was present.

***In Attendance***

Terri Hansen	Harry Themal	Sue Cherrin
Andrew Hansen	Judy Glenn	Edmond Bischoff
Cheryl Regan	Joe Painter	Joan W. Phibbs
Chelsey Buscaglia	Cittam Shanbhag	Christiana Dobrzynski
Pat Lane	Sofia Hogan-Shanbhag	Elaine Schmerling
Anne P. Lutz	Barbara Mondzelewski	Anne Gutsche
Alison Wakelin	Janet Cosgrove	Oliver Gutsche
Terry Harvey	Melissa Parsonson	Katrina Nelson
Betty Ann Themal	Chris Monson	
Joan Fitzgerald	Maureen Gordon	

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** The minutes of the November 2019 meeting were unanimously approved with the following edits: Remove reference to the Audit report because it was given in September, and note that Janet Cosgrove reported for the Assessment Committee, not Joe Grippe.

**BUDGET:** Drew Hansen reporting: This is the first time Drew has been in charge of the Budget. There were several questions:

Elaine Schmerling- The budget for Paths and Natural Lands is \$5600, which includes grant and donation monies. There were several sources of money that resulted in the \$5600 in income. The proposal is to keep the budget at \$5600 for 2020.

Betty Ann Themal: Memorial Garden has not been given any town money, the same as last year. The Memorial Garden Committee feels that the Town should include a budget for regular maintenance as was the case before last year, so that the donation fund could be used for expenditures that come up on an irregular basis, such as tree work, fences, benches, etc. The Trustees pay for mowing and treating hemlocks for bugs. After discussion of the merits, the Town Meeting moved and voted unanimously to put a \$300 line item in for Memorial Garden maintenance which would leave the donations for more lasting improvements.

The Trustees are giving the regular donation of \$10,000 plus the \$3500 for donations to community groups, minus the \$3600 for snow removal/roads.

Joan Fitzgerald: the Trustees have received calls from the Craft Shop, Library, and Arden Page asking about the regular donations for 2019, which they did not receive. Holly is investigating.

With the above amendments the budget has been accepted with one abstention

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Holly Custer reporting in absentia:

Operating Accounts:	\$ 57,375.00
Municipal Street Aid:	\$ 28,206.18
<u>Arden Building and Loan:</u>	<u>\$ 19,965.18</u>
<b><i>Total Funds Available:</i></b>	<b><i>\$105,546.36</i></b>

**REGISTRATION COMMITTEE:** Betty Ann Themal reporting for Cindy Cohen: Our committee works to identify new residents and welcome them to Ardentown. We have several new leaseholder and residents:

- Purushottam (Uttam) Shanbhag and Sofia Hogan –Shanbhag who moved into 2309 Loreley Lane in late November.
- Michael and Marion Pione are here with us, they have moved into 1507 The Mall

Since it is not easy to keep up with new tenants in rental properties, the committee requested that if anyone knows of any new tenants, please let the committee know about it.

An important note about the ACRA Directory:

A new directory will be coming out this summer. If you wish to change, correct, or add anything to your current listing, or if you are not presently listed and want to be, now is the time to reach out to the people putting the directory together. The deadline for information is **March 4<sup>th</sup>**.

How to contact:

- Email at [ACRAdirectory@gmail.com](mailto:ACRAdirectory@gmail.com)
- Online form – see the February Arden Page
- Call ACRA board member Mary Brent Whipple (302) 475-8027

**MEMORIAL GARDEN:** Betty Ann Themal reporting: The committee will be meeting soon to plan for new plantings this Spring.

Two committee members' terms expire this month; they are Rusty Hoegger and Betty Ann Themal. I (Betty Ann) agree to serve again and Chris Monson has agreed to stand for election to the committee.

Janet Cosgrove: asked if there was a system in place for sending letters every couple years to the families of those in the memorial garden. Janet feels that surviving loved ones, if reminded, would donate again.

Betty Ann and others at the meeting thought it was a good idea. A letter would also serve to update people on the Memorial Garden, especially for those who have moved away.

**ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE:** Janet Cosgrove reporting: The committee has determined the best way to consult with the trustees about the setting of land rent is to study how land rent is established: 1) what does it cost to run the village of Ardentown, 2) where does the money come from, 3) how is the money spent, transferred and reserved, and 4) how is land rent calculated?

We ask the trustees to provide us with their budgets from 2010 - 2020 and also a written formula used to calculate land rent. We ask the town secretary to provide us with the village budgets from 2010 - 2020.

We will schedule a meeting to include budget and audit committees when we have the documents.

**PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE:** nothing to report.

**ARCHIVES COMMITTEE:** Melissa Parsonson reporting: The archives committee is working on improving the interior of the Gild Hall and putting explanations under the portraits. They are also working on having disaster recovery kits in the event of a disaster. Ardentown's 100th Anniversary is coming in 2022 and they are looking for contributions to the planned exhibit

**BUZZ COMMITTEE:** There is nothing to report specifically in relation to Ardentown. A resident brought up that since Ardentown gives money for the support of community events it would be nice to have regular reports of how that money is being spent.

**PUBLIC WORKS:** Cheryl Regan and Elaine Schmerling reporting

**Roads:** We are currently compiling a list of areas that need addressing.

**Snow:** We are under our budget for snow removal so far.

**Natural lands:** Spotted lanternfly (SLF) –Now is the time to search for SLF egg masses...115 and counting so far in 2020 (over 360 since the fall) in the Ardens; found mostly in ALL AREAS OF ARDENTOWN. Elaine Schmerling would like to help search for them on all leaseholds and all town areas, especially edge & degraded areas and anywhere near Sconset, creeks, maples or Japanese styrax trees. They are found everywhere in Ardentown, on leaseholds where people don't recall seeing the bugs. *Pass sample around, each mud-coated mass has an average of 30-50 eggs for next year's season.* The mud will dry off and they can hatch April-May.

We had a successful hunt w/Teen ACRA from HG to Petit Green removed from 3 red maple trees. Have found on many types of smooth-barked trees: on all maples during a smooth-bark stage, all cherries w/smooth bark, birches, willows, ironwoods, magnolias under side branches, English yew as well as tree of heavens, dead trees, rusty metal, rocks and more)...*Elaine Schmerling has photos of a few masses; there is variability in shape & size, and locations found.* Scraping off the egg masses is easiest to do and can make the most impact and we are asking for everyone's help- and I and several others (Painters, Hansens, Terry Harvey, John Cronin) can help.

Finding as many as we have found, they will still be a big problem next year. But since we have already prevented about 15,000 from hatching, and with everyone's help to search for more the next 2 months, we hope to significantly reduce the numbers that will be here next year. They also seem to like hiding in the ivy and can lay eggs under it – another reason to cut ivy off trees (to save trees, AND to look for the masses).

We were awarded a \$500 mini grant to help pay for materials for traps for the adults next fall, and now Joe Painter is helping to perfect the physical trap to go into a netting bag. Starting summer to mostly fall.

**TRAILS** – thanks to Chris Monson who continues to keep the trails clear in Sunnyside! He has lined some of the paths with limbs.

**RESTORATION** – Elaine Schmerling has gone out a few times, twice with a Redtail crew to Sunnyside, and last Wed in the Ardentown woods on the Arden-Ardentown border between Edmund's and the Bryants. We have a good volunteer group now, thanks to Ardentown residents Terry Harvey, Joe & Lee Painter, John Cronin & Nick Liberman and Hayni; we cut ivy off about 100 trees this winter. Contact me if you want to join us! Due to variable weather and schedules, it is hard to plan too far in advance. I have Redtail helping Tuesday 1:30-3:30 at the bottom of Sconset, since I found one egg mass there, to cut ivy from trees and look for more egg masses.

Outside volunteers: Elaine Schmerling has had a few school groups pulling ivy back in the Ardentown woods below Hugh & Joan's, from the creek up: Thanks especially to Janna Schefflen's Archmere teens, a Charter student and her mom, and a teen group from the Wilmington Youth leadership Commission, we have several large ivy piles there (and didn't yet see egg masses there). If you walk the trails feel free to pull another strand or 2 of ivy and add to the piles! We hope to see more

wildflowers come this spring. It is a very rich area. And if you know of any teens wanting service hours, we have endless ivy and spring garlic mustard to pull.

EARTHDAY CLEANUP – and last-chance SLF egg mass search – Saturday, April 4 (Raindate Ardens – April 5) –meet at Buzz for Coffee & treats 9, or must meet at work spots 9:30. Elaine Schmerling would like to work with Sconset residents to clear out trash from decades of dumping, between their leaseholds and the CSX hill (heaviest SLF infestation – they are laying eggs on these items) and give one final search for egg masses. NCWA provides bulk trash pickup and they are the Arden Forest Committee provide materials and snacks; it's a great effort to join in on.

POLLINATOR SURVEY – Elaine Schmerling would like permission to allow DE Div of Fish & Wildlife to conduct a first-ever pollinator survey April-Nov, on Ardentown and Sunnyside lands. There is no baseline data for bumblebees or flower flies (hoverflies) in Delaware, and they have few N DE sites, and would love to pick a few sites in our 50 acres (plus she is giving permission for my leasehold).

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE RESIDENTS:

Melissa Parsonsons would like Public Works to examine making the East Mall one way roads.

Joan Phibbs would like to know if there are any plans to do any improvements in the Glen. The trails are a muddy mess. Elaine Schmerling has talked to Rich Cropper about working in the Glen, and it would cost a great deal. Elaine Schmerling will look into bringing in some rocks.

Elaine is aware that Arden is spending \$20,000 to do a storm water study and has reached out to Ardentown and Ardencroft. At this point Ardentown feels this is more expensive than we can manage, but the issue needs more investigation. We will wait and see the results of Arden's study for now.

Water run off from Candlelight has always been a big problem for the Glen.

Elaine Schmerling suggests interested residents contact her and Carol Larson about participating in a storm water study.

**TRUSTEES REPORT:** The good news is that the Richardson leasehold has been sold to Page Dwyer

Candlelight needs new fire escapes and the Trustees are putting \$30,000 toward this. The Candlelight has storage issues and they will be putting storage units in.

Janet Cosgrove asked about Ivy Gables. They have begun construction, and Alison Wakelin acknowledges that there have been some difficulties for residents on Swiss Lane

The historic stone haha wall has been demolished. Harry Themal reports that he spoke to George Loudon who says he will collect the stone and the wall will be rebuilt.

Harry Themal reports that George Loudon will be creating a new and updated website with construction updates.

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM THE RESIDENTS:

Joan Phibbs: We found out that they lost internet/cable because it comes through the Ivy Gables property. The cable was cut.

Janet Cosgrove: There is a line item of \$25,000 for trees in the Trustee budget. Janet asked who determines how and where the money is spent. Janet said there is a tree behind her leasehold in the Station Path that is engulfed in ivy and has large branches hanging over the wires and a transformer. Janet has asked Pat Lane to come look at the tree several times.

Pat Lane: I am responsible for trees and will come look at it. Recently, several trees behind my leasehold and behind the Willis leasehold were removed because they were hazardous.

Pat Lane: The 2020 budget is the same as 2019 with an increase in Land Rent to reflect the increase in County taxes.

Joan Fitzgerald: There were two leasehold transfers since the last Town Meeting, 2309 and 2302 Loreley Lane.

**TOWN CHAIR REPORT:** The Town Chair often receives invitations to meetings from the state or county, and she would like to bring (or send) anyone who has interest in town affairs.

Ardentown is currently not a member of the League of Local Governments, but Alison feels they perform a valuable function, and suggests we should consider rejoining. The yearly membership fee for Ardentown would be \$500. There was no enthusiasm for this.

**Comcast and Verizon:** While Comcast expects to renegotiate an informal agreement with Ardentown, they have also initiated a formal renewal process, in case they need the protections of the Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984. Comcast will soon arrange a meeting to discuss informally negotiating a renewal agreement. Does anyone want to go through the formal process, or are we OK to expect an informal agreement. If there is any issue, we will go ahead with the formal process, but then who wants to head this? There was no request to go through the formal process.

Alison wrote a letter to Mike Pompeo about resettling refugees, which stated that Ardentown consents resettling refugees in our community. Meanwhile, a federal judge in Maryland temporarily blocked an executive order signed by President Trump that would allow state and local governments to refuse to accept refugees.

**Mosquito control:** Every year we need to sign up with the state so that if we need to have mosquitoes sprayed we can. All agreed

University of Delaware has an initiative to promote **healthy and equitable communities**. We are not a deprived community and we could be partnered with a more distressed community. If anyone is interested in pursuing this, please reach out to Alison Wakelin.

**FEMA NCC All Hazard Mitigation Plan** is required to be filed with FEMA every 5 years. The three town chairs and Joe Grippe met with Dave Carpenter last week to review any new actions and to look over the Vulnerability Assessment.

There are 16 different initiatives we need to be in compliance with. In the past most of these things were covered by the NCC plans.

Ardentown had a plan from 2015 for three ongoing actions:

(i) Conduct a structural evaluation to determine the possibility of using the Candlelight Theatre as a shelter in the event of a disaster. Consider also using Ivy Gables.

**Status:** neither seems suited for this purpose

ii) Develop a call out database to notify residents in the event of a disaster.

**Status:** FEMA has a database including Ardentown that can put an emergency notification on our phones when needed. They can focus it on any area needed. Therefore this becomes an issue only for lesser outreach, such as updates after an event, guidelines of how to proceed etc.

(iii) Marsh Road property acquisition project

**Status:** completed

Alison Wakelin would like the Community Planning Committee to take this on, since it happens on a regular basis. Alison asked the Planning Committee to meet after the town meeting to choose a chairman and make some plans to go forward.

#### **ELECTIONS:**

Archives: Melissa Parsonson - elected unanimously

Memorial Garden: Betty Ann Themal and Chris Monson - elected unanimously

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Janet Cosgrove: What is being done to find and hire a trustee secretary? There is a line item of \$7200. for the secretary. Five years ago, the trustees promised to hire a secretary so that the election of Joan as trustee could go forward. Who prepared the Land Rent Bills? Who is currently getting that pay? Why are we not doing a public search for a secretary?

Joan Fitzgerald answered that a few years ago they hired a bookkeeper and that did not work out. Most recently, Shari Phalan was the secretary for a little less than a year. Since then the position and the pay has been split between Betty Ann Themal and Joan Fitzgerald. There is a perception of a conflict of interest and Katrina Nelson expressed a desire for more transparency. Joan reported that she has repeatedly said that she is willing to stand down as either the secretary or as a trustee, and the last couple of years have been very difficult.

Alison Wakelin will discuss this with the Trustees and work to find a solution.

Meeting Adjourned at 8:30pm

Respectfully Submitted,  
Terri Hansen